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ABSTRACT

Federal policy and research regarding staff development in rural areas must take into consideration the inherent limitations in teacher inservice and preservice education, rural educational problems (limited human resources, migrant education, modern education services) that could be remedied by improved staff development, and the role of both the federal government and the schools in education and social reform. The primary role of rural schools is to instruct in basic content areas and career preparation, not to solve non-school problems. Realistic federal policy, related to specifically targeted federal dollars, should: deal directly with rural isolation problems in the delivery of staff development programs; focus on the recruitment and training of promising residents of specific rural areas for teaching careers; support the development of specialized training programs for teachers of rural children; and support the development and implementation of teacher training programs for both early childhood and adult education. Four significant areas for future research are regional projections of future employment opportunities, baseline data concerning youth and community aspirations about school goals, delineation of specific areas of educational deficit to rural school children, and realistic appraisal of school capability to support change and provide impetus for improving general rural conditions. (SB)

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STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS--

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND RESEARCH

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INTRODUCTION

The development of recommendations for policy and research for staff development* in rural areas appears deceptively simple. Surface logic would suggest that one simply list the problems of rural education, and then develop policy recommendations that would provide the necessary initiative. Unfortunately, such a simplistic approach to the problem would likely result in policy recommendations that are not only infeasible, but also destined to create unrealistic expectations that lead to unfulfilled promises. Recommendations for policy and research in this area cannot come out of the blue, but rather, must be grounded in a realistic understanding of the educational and political world in which rural education exists.

Three areas are important to explore in an effort to develop the necessary context for recommendations about policy and research. First, it is important that one have at least a rudimentary understanding of the field of teacher education, and its capability to respond to initiatives one typically finds embedded in policy. Secondly, it is important to specify the important educational problems of rural areas that are most amenable to remedy by the creation of improved programs for staff development. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it is necessary to understand the role of federal policy in education, as well as the capability of institutions to implement any policy that is created.

The accomplishment of the above three tasks will create a situation where it is possible to eliminate many of the "larger" issues of staff development and research that transcend the improvement of education in

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*For purposes of euphony and style, inservice education will be used interchangeably with staff development in this paper.

rural areas. These issues will not be considered as central in developing this context since they pervade the entire field of staff development, and are not specific to the rural condition. However, in some instances these issues do offer constraints, and therefore will be acknowledged as specific recommendations are constructed. For example, the problems of accreditation and certification--continuing thorns in the side of teacher education--must be recognized as providing legitimate constraints for the development of any policy concerning staff development.

The exploration of these three areas will provide a context within which realistic recommendations can be developed concerning both policy and needed research in staff development in rural areas. These recommendations for policy will be buttressed by some examples of how development might occur, while each research area will be accompanied by a rationale that will underscore not only its importance, but also its relationship to improved staff development programs in rural areas.

TEACHER EDUCATION AND THE SCHOOLS

Although teacher education is an active professional field of considerable magnitude, there are definite limitations in the ability of the field to deliver staff development programs designed to meet specific needs. Additionally, elementary and secondary schools are, in many ways, something less than the best host for staff development efforts.

The observer of teacher education probably believes that a young man or woman enters a college or university and devotes four years to becoming a competent teacher. That simply is not the case. Rather, the

undergraduate teacher education student devotes the bulk of his or her energies to meeting requirements for graduation that have little or nothing to do with the instruction of children. In fact, only about one-quarter to one-third of a teacher education student's collegiate career is focused in the area of education. In fact, the elementary education student receives less than 500 hours of classroom instruction devoted to the field of education, while the secondary preservice student receives only about half that amount. If one adds to this the clinical experiences (e.g., student teaching) and totals it all up, the sad fact is that in a concentrated program, teachers could receive all their professional training in less than six months.[1]

The field of preservice teacher education tends to be broken into many areas that reflect the structure of schools and colleges of education rather than the training needs of students. Thus, the minimal amount of training time for students must accommodate contributions from a variety of areas, e.g., psychology of education, philosophy of education, sociology of education, reading, mathematics, science, and so on. Amazingly, through this process, students do progress and learn the rudiments of teaching. The point to be made, however, is that the structure of preservice education does not place in the schools totally competent teachers capable of teaching a variety of subjects to all types of children. The need for inservice education is evident, right from the first day of teaching.

If preservice teacher education has a less than appropriate structure, inservice education has no structure at all. Howey has described it as a "multi-faceted if not many-splendored" activity.[2] The basic

problem for this lack of structure is that no institution claims ownership of inservice education. Colleges and universities traditionally have placed greater emphasis on preservice programs, and probably view inservice teacher education as a source of income rather than as an area to expend revenue. School districts have typically viewed inservice education as the responsibility of higher education, with the disclaimer that the major role of elementary and secondary schools is the instruction of children. Consequently, one cannot find a financial base for staff development nor can one find an institution which values the activity sufficiently to focus their efforts toward the development of high quality programs. Simply stated, inservice education/staff development is an orphan in the field.

Considering the orphan status of the endeavor, it is amazing that programs have grown at all. It is even more amazing that one can point to innumerable examples of high quality programs. Some, in fact, can be found in schools and colleges of education, others in school districts, and still others in regional service units or intermediate school districts. Nearly all, however, share the problem of operating outside the mainstream of institutional activities. Thus, high quality programs that do develop tend to reflect the efforts of a small number of dedicated professionals, and tend to be short-lived--when the driving force leaves, so does the high quality program. Additionally, a great deal of the progress in inservice education and staff development has come about by virtue of external funds. This, of course, almost assures that a program has a life expectancy directly related to the grant period. In other words, the exemplary programs that have developed are not likely to

be institutionalized.

To complicate matters even more, there has emerged in the past few years a notable power struggle for control of teacher education. While historically teacher education has been the bailiwick of professors in institutions of higher education, more recently, teacher organizations have become interested in the field. Although the struggle relates primarily to inservice programs, it is also pervading the field of initial teacher preparation. Evidence of the ever-expanding influence of teacher organizations can be found in the teacher center projects that were funded by the U. S. Office of Education last year, in the recent revamping of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (the NEA now has a strong voice in that organization) and in the regulations of several states for the registration of teacher education programs. New York State, for example, requires collaboration with teachers and even teacher approval for the registration of basic training programs for teachers. Although the power struggle for control in teacher education may, in the final analysis, result in a stronger field, the growing pains are notable. Thus far, there has been little indication that teacher education is better off for all of the activity that has occurred.

Thus, it appears that each level of teacher education has some problems. Preservice programs tend to be too short and suffer from the inappropriate departmental structures of higher education. Inservice teacher education, as well as other staff development programs, are growing haphazardly and usually without the support of an institution that will assume primary responsibility. Finally, teacher education has become the focus of political efforts of teacher organizations, which in turn has threatened the institutions that have historically profited

from the activity.

The point of this very brief discussion has been to demonstrate that although the resources to implement a policy exists, teacher education is not a sleeping giant waiting to be awakened, but rather a struggling enterprise with a host of problems. These problems all offer constraints that must be kept in mind as the field is called upon to respond to new problems (i.e., rural education), no matter how deserving these problems may be.

About the schools. Schools are organized for many reasons. Primarily, of course, schools are organized for the instruction of children. Additionally, however, schools are also organized for the convenience of communities, to maintain accordance with negotiated teacher contracts, and to achieve such mundane goals as accommodating school bus schedules. Most importantly, however, schools are not organized to accommodate staff development programs. Consequently, if there is any single area of staff development programming that has not been widely implemented, it is "job-embedded inservice training," which is based on the notion that teaching skills cannot be learned in isolation from where they are to be practiced. i.e., in school classrooms.[3]

It would take notable reorganization of the way schools operate if they are to become adequate hosts for job-embedded staff development programs. There is, as one might expect, tremendous resistance to reorganizing schools for this purpose. First, and probably foremost, communities as reflected by boards of education do not see the need for this type of effort to accommodate additional training for teachers--professionals, who they assume, are trained before they enter classrooms.

Additionally, it would take extra personnel to implement a well-planned staff development program that occurs within the context of the instructional day. Finally, some school professionals themselves are reluctant to move from an organizational structure that is familiar and offers security to one that would require extra effort on their part, would render their classrooms and their offices more visible, and still might not provide programming that would be all that helpful.

There can be little doubt that many school professionals see the need for and desire the development of improved programs for staff development. Yet, with the factors that operate against major change in the way schools operate, the sad fact remains that public schools are not good host institutions for inservice programming--it simply isn't seen as their purpose.

Summary. Although the preceding discussion concerning the field of teacher education and the schools themselves may be viewed as painting a bleak picture, that was not the intent. Rather, the intent has been only to sketch out in very brief terms the worlds that must come together to develop programs and to provide the support for research that might be suggested in any federal policy. In the final analysis, one must accept the fact that the state of the scene which has been described thus far, although not negating the possibility for the development of improved teacher training programs, clearly suggests problems to be encountered and dealt with, and constraints to be recognized.

EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS OF RURAL AREAS

It is essential to review the unique problems of rural America and to relate these to concerns with rural education. An over-arching problem that impacts all others is the obvious geographic isolation of rural communities. One can view this problem as complicating the issues presented in the following discussion.

In an effort not to attempt to develop a position in an area that has not constituted an interest of the writers, no attempt will be made to develop a thorough understanding of the problems of rural areas. Rather, points will be abstracted from the knowledge about rural areas that relate to the policy recommendations that will be presented later in this paper.

Poverty and exiting wealth. Hughes and Spence have described rural America as encompassing a wide spectrum of financial levels, with great wealth and technical advancement at one end of the spectrum, and extreme poverty and resistance to change at the other.[4] They suggest that rural wealth is related to industrial advancement rather than to advances possibly attributed to rural education. Unfortunately, it appears that technological advances in agriculture have produced a double drain on the rural economy. First, technological advance has brought with it machines which have reduced the number of available jobs. Second, the increased profits of the advanced technology often have flowed into corporations located in non-rural settings. It appears that rural wealth has provided little or no support for rural residents. In fact, the President's National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty concluded that, "rural poverty is so widespread and so acute as to be a national disgrace. . ."[5]

The Commission specifically found that there is proportionally more poverty in rural America than in the cities: in the cities, one person in eight is poor; in the suburbs, one person in fifteen is poor; while in rural areas, one person in four is poor.

Succinctly, there is little financial support for rural schools. The value of property is below that of cities, taxes on rural property are at the maximum levels, and agricultural lands are provided exemptions which further reduce the tax base.[6] It is not surprising that rural areas spend less per capita income to support education than do other areas.[7] Furthermore, human resources are drained as individuals migrate to the cities seeking employment and better living conditions. It is also suspected that those who do migrate are the more talented and aggressive citizens--those very individuals that rural communities need for continuing development. The net result is a shortage of educational resources such as adequate facilities, materials, and well-trained personnel.

Limited jobs. Farms have become increasingly mechanized, and therefore farm employment has been reduced by 50% since 1950.[8] In the other areas of rural employment, e.g., mining, forestry and local industry, the number of jobs is also being reduced as services or products are no longer needed. Consequently, migration to urban areas has increased. However, because of inadequate rural education, many rural migrants are unable to find employment. As Campbell has reported, there is a definite need to focus on incorporating vocational or career education in rural programs so as to prepare rural students for a wide variety of vocational roles in non-rural areas.[9] Without this training, the rural migrants to

the city can only be expected to further aggravate urban problems.

The absence of rural jobs has definitely contributed to an out-migration problem. The existence, however, of seasonal farm work in rural areas has created another problem, i.e., seasonal migration within the rural community. While out-migration is potentially a long-term social problem, migration within rural areas creates a day-to-day press on rural schools. It is most difficult, if not impossible, to provide sequential instruction to children who are moving from place to place and school to school. In fact, most of these migrant students do not complete a basic educational program.[10]

Adequately preparing students for out-migration and providing a basic education for students migrating within the rural community are certainly agendas for rural education. It is doubtful, however, that rural education currently has the resources to meet these priorities. It is even more doubtful that rural education will be able to address, with current resources, yet another type of migration problem--that of in-migration. Scher has found that significant numbers of people are leaving the city for rural areas.[11] It is certain that this new influx of students will create additional problems in already troubled rural education.

Community values that are resistant to change. Rural America has problems relating not only to resources, but also to people. These problems have created issues for rural education--namely a dwindling financial base and an inability of community residents to relate to educational programs. Additionally, rural education should better address the needs of students who are migrating within the rural communities as well

as out to urban areas and from urban areas. One might conclude that in order to tackle these problems, rural education must change. Yet, it has been found that rural communities are distinguished in that they are traditionally and essentially resistant to change and particularly to educational change. For example, the national movement toward the consolidation of one-room rural schools into broader districts, begun decades ago and yet still not complete, was not easily or quickly accepted by the rural communities. While the value and logic of consolidating so as to provide more and better resources for students seems self-apparent, it apparently was and still is not, in some cases. It is likely that any new thrust to dramatically improve, i.e., change rural education, will likewise meet with resistance.

Although this phenomenon could certainly profit from a much deeper analysis, for the purpose of this paper, suffice it to note that community resistance to change has been found, and most authorities agree that it is a significant obstacle to solving many educational problems.

Summary. This brief section has attempted to demonstrate that the problems associated with poverty and exiting wealth, limited jobs, and community values that are resistant to change, feed a host of educational problems. Although these issues were only briefly skimmed, they should help provide the underpinning for the policy and research recommendations that will follow. One must also keep in mind that these problems, and others as well, are magnified by the geographic isolation that is naturally associated with rural areas.

CONTEXT FOR RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT POLICY AND RESEARCH

A foundational understanding of the world in which staff development must operate has developed thus far. The conditions that have been described in teacher education, schools, rural America and rural education are considered permanent rather than transitory--they are not easily changed. In order to change these conditions--which it will be shown set parameters for the initiation of staff development programs, one would need policy concerning teacher education, policy concerning school organization--and, policy concerning rural areas. A consideration of the dilemma that this analysis presents leads one to a consideration of various levels of policy and their relationship to improved staff development programs.

Levels of policy. It is possible to specify a variety of "levels" of policy. Clearly, policy concerning staff development in rural schools is not only targeted at a fairly small aspect of the educational endeavor, but must also be considered to operate at a subordinate level to policies concerning either rural education or rural areas in general. Thus, one can think about micro and macro policy. In this instance, policy about staff development is considered micro policy and if developed in isolation from a more over-arching policy, should probably be constrained and specific. Equally evident is the notion that any policy concerning staff development in rural areas must be complementary and/or facilitative to macro policy related to rural areas or rural education. It became increasingly apparent as research for this paper was being performed that there currently exists no macro policy about

either rural areas in general or more specifically about rural education.

There has, however, been activity that one can consider to be attempts to fill the void of a lack of policy. In this instance, there are many educational and social problems that relate to education that have paved the way for the development of a variety or programs. Much of this activity has been based on the assumption that schools are the appropriate vehicle for improvement--whatever the priority area being addressed by the program. Some of the programs have been buttressed by either judicial or legislative action (e.g., desegregation and mainstreaming programs). Interestingly, where programs have been buttressed by judicial or legislative mandate, these mandates relate to civil rights issues rather than to educational issues. Simply stated, the federal government has no authority in education--that right has been historically delegated to the states. The result nonetheless has often been an attempt, through federal regulation, to solve pressing social problems in the schools.

Thus, a fairly brief field trip through many of America's schools will find programs and directives relating to the desegregation of both students and teachers, the elimination of sexism, the maintenance of the rights of the handicapped, and a sensitivity to dealing with children from a variety of cultural backgrounds. If one extends the field trip slightly, and looks a little more closely, one can find programs relating to the basic nutrition of children, and even to the maintenance and improvement of basic mental health. Even more recently, it is possible to find programs designed to stem the tide of drug usage and even to help children develop "correct" moral standards (the latter is an

example of a misinterpreted educational concept).

Many, if not most, of these programs have been conceived, initiated, and implemented with little regard to the ability of a school to host the program and to respond to the problem that is being addressed. It is not surprising, then, that many of these programs have been less than successful--in fact, less than acceptable to both communities and to education professionals. Assuming that schools are the necessary host for the development of staff development programs, it is important to explore this area.

The zone of capability of schools. If the conditions relating to the field of teacher education, basic school organization, and problems relating to rural society in education form the contextual foundation for thinking about policy in the area of staff development, then the conditions which describe the purpose of schools suggest very real constraints. It is in understanding the relationship of the context with the role constraints of schools that a realistic basis for the development of policy in staff development in rural schools can be established. This, then, would describe the "zone of capability" of a school to respond to any kind of a programmatic initiative.

Assuming that the society in which rural schools operate has been determined to be characterized by poverty, the non-existence of jobs, and the exit of "wealth," then it becomes clear that it is necessary to make some realistic assumptions about schools in rural areas (in fact, schools in general) that establish parameters for the resulting recommendations concerning policy and research. Thus--

- Schools are not a primary instrument in solving non-schooling problems in rural areas, i.e., facilitation rather than pro-action is within a school's "zone of capability."
- The basic role of schools is the instruction of children in grades K-12, with expanding, even perhaps becoming basic roles in the area of early childhood and adult education.
- Schools in general, are neither prepared for nor capable of going beyond, (1) basic content areas, (2) creating an awareness of the non-school world, (3) career exploration, and (4) preparation for careers that exist and do not require post-secondary programming.

This analysis has had as its purpose the establishment of a realistic base for recommending policy as well as research areas in staff development. It is recognized that while it is possible for a realistic analysis to dampen aspiration, aspiration that is not based in reality is likely to be not only unproductive, but even damaging. It is important, then, to discuss--

Ambitions for federal policy. The temptation for anyone who wants to improve education through the recommendation of policy is to shoot high in those recommendations. A contention, however, that undergirds this paper is that to shoot too high, without considering all of the factors that are important, would be to repeat mistakes that have been made in the past. It must also be remembered that the authority for operating and maintaining schools is vested in the states, and the acceptance of programs meant to implement a federal policy should be, for the most part, considered optional. Although there are those who will

point to laws which impact education and the schools, it must be remembered that those laws are not designed to improve education in the schools, but rather to ensure the civil rights of individuals who inhabit educational environments. In essence, these laws, and supposedly the regulations that emerge from them, make clear that educational institutions must not operate when that operation is in violation of any individual's constitutional rights. The improvement of education and schools--in this process of ensuring one's constitutional rights--must be considered serendipitous, and not a natural outcome of the initiative.

Policy need not be timid, but must be reality based. Policy that is to result in programs that will be successful cannot avoid an analysis of the potential that exists in the field as well as the conditions that permeate the environment targeted for change. Just as teachers must "take children from where they are," programs resulting from policy must accept conditions that exist and work toward improvement from there.

One final consideration has directed the recommendations for both policy and research areas that follow. Except in situations where major constitutional issues are involved, it is assumed that the role of policy relates specifically to the targeting of federal funds. Thus, policy for which no funds are available, or policy for which no funds are required, would be either weak or vacuous policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY

The recommendations for policy presented in this paper will focus quite specifically on educational problems in rural areas that appear to be amenable to solution by improved staff development. In taking this

approach, it should be noted that many of the more over-arching problems in teacher education that could benefit from the development of policy will be ignored. For example, the problem of the certification/licensure of teachers is a major issue that is being debated at state levels across the nation. Obviously, decisions concerning this area focus on the development of a policy. However, because this problem area transcends the focus of this paper, it will be ignored. By the same token, important issues such as the professional accreditation of teacher education programs will likewise not be included. Finally, as any observer on the scene is well aware, there is a tremendous power struggle emerging for the control or governance of teacher education. Historically the bailiwick of colleges and universities, teacher organizations are now becoming more active in their pursuit of some measure of authority in this area. Again, this is an example of a problem that goes clearly beyond the scope of this paper, and will not be included. However, it must be remembered that these problems do exist, and to develop a thorough understanding of the strategies for implementing the policies that will be suggested, one should be aware of their existence.[12]

A point that is nearly always made when discussing staff development is that staff development programs ought to be designed for all education personnel. The writers of this paper wholeheartedly agree. Thus, although the recommendations to be presented will focus on staff development programs for teachers, they should be construed to include other education professionals as well.

Recommendation #1--Federal policy should deal directly with the problems of rural isolation in the delivery of staff development programs. Although this recommendation appears to be quite simple, that is not the

case. The development of programs to implement this policy are likely to be not only complex and diverse, but they are also likely to be costly. For example, one approach to implementing this policy might be the development of mobile units for inservice training of teachers and other education personnel. There is precedent for this type of program, and it has traditionally been well received. Generally, some type of van is selected, and supplied with a variety of teacher education materials and equipment, as well as a "mini" professional library, and perhaps other accoutrements. Obviously, this type of programmatic effort allows a teacher educator to take the programs to the schools. It enables program and program materials to focus on single, rather isolated schools, and even allows for neighboring schools to participate. One might view a mobile staff development unit as a traveling teacher center.

Another method for dealing with the delivery of staff development problems in rural areas might be the funding and development of low usage teacher centers. These centers would be used by significantly fewer teachers than would comparable centers in either urban or suburban areas. Assuming that the funding of low usage teacher centers would include the provision of professional staff, it is obvious that this could become a very costly process. It would, however, provide both human and material resources for rural education professionals at a level above and beyond what one normally finds in a teacher center. Thus, one could expect more and better service, and hopefully more involvement of participating teachers. Although cost effectiveness would be an issue, this type of

program should be initiated with the understanding that it will need a higher cost per teacher ratio than would comparable programs in more densely populated areas.

Finally, the implementation of this policy could also entail concentrated training periods for teachers and other education personnel at locations where delivery systems are already available. Obviously, this would entail not only time away from the job, but it would also require travel and subsistence costs. In many ways, however, this would be one of the easiest approaches to dealing with the problems of delivering staff development to geographically isolated areas. It might, however, not be as popular with the education professionals as would strategies designed to bring the resources to the rural areas. One benefit of this approach to implementing the policy recommendation would be the likelihood that rural education personnel would have the opportunity to come in contact with a wider variety of "experts," and hopefully derive more benefit. It would be helpful to develop a program of this nature in tandem with a program that would place staff development personnel in rural areas so that the skills that are developed in the off-site training program can be followed up in the schools.

Recommendation #2--Federal policy should focus on the recruitment and training of the most promising residents of specific rural areas for careers in teaching. This recommendation, of course, assumes that staff development includes preservice teacher education. This policy recommendation, like the last one, would also be fairly costly to implement. It would require not only a process to identify promising teacher education candidates, but also support for the students while receiving the train-

ing, plus a guarantee of a teaching position in their home community upon graduation. Obviously, the implementation of this policy would be best served if it were dovetailed with the development of special teacher training programs focusing on preparing teachers to deal with children in rural areas.

There does appear to be precedent for this type of recommendation. There has been a brief history of programs attempting to recruit young people into teaching who did not come from the target area. Additionally, these people were often from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Although specific data do not appear to be available, observations of these programs suggest that they have not been particularly successful--the new, implanted teachers simply don't stay long.

The recruitment of indigenous community would automatically result in having teacher candidates who understand the values and culture of the community, and who are likely to remain in an educational position in the host community. A best guess would suggest that although at first blush this may appear to be a fairly costly program, the fact that the teachers are likely to remain in the community suggests that in the long run it would not only be cost effective, but also probably more successful.

Recommendation #3--Federal policy should support the development of specialized training programs for teachers of children in rural areas. This policy recommendation probably offers more diverse opportunities for implementation than any of the others suggested. First, it is likely that the implementation of this policy would result in the development

of teacher training materials that are focused on rural area students. A survey of the teacher training materials on the market suggests that there is a definite void in this area. In fact, the development of teacher training materials for urban areas has only been a recent occurrence in teacher education. Ideally, materials would be developed for both preservice and inservice training programs for a variety of education professionals. It is assumed that the development of culturally relevant teacher training materials would lead to or would imply the development of culturally relevant materials for children.

It is suggested that programs be developed that are based in a variety of locations. Obviously, many of the specialized teacher training programs should be developed on site, in rural area schools. Additionally, however, one should not ignore the colleges and universities as potential homes for specialized programs. There can be little doubt that a great deal of the expertise in teacher education, as well as the materials necessary to support a high quality program, are found on campuses of schools where high quality teacher education programs currently exist.

The implementation of this policy would also have to entertain the problem of "who are appropriate teacher trainers?" It should be recognized that the traditional school or college of education professor, although ofttimes well qualified, is not necessarily the most appropriate trainer for teachers of rural children. The implementation of this policy might mean the training and embedded placement of "resident trainers," or school based teacher educators. This notion is consistent with a recent movement in teacher education, and an emerging teacher education

specialty role that is likely to grow in the years ahead.

Although little has been stated concerning the content of special programs for children in rural areas, it is obvious that teachers must be trained to deal with the reality of out-migration. They need to be trained to develop marketable skills of rural students. Thus, the implementation of this policy might well mean preparing students for careers in other geographic areas where jobs are available. This could lead to a virtual myriad of different programs, but it seems apparent that the programs would not exist only in the rural target areas, and would most likely involve training teachers to help students accommodate to urban and suburban locales.

Recommendation #4--Federal policy should support the development and implementation of teacher training programs for both early childhood and adult education. One way of attempting to accommodate the rigid community value structure, which often includes suspicion of schooling, is to provide more services to residents. That is clearly one intent of this policy recommendation. Not only could programs for both young children and adults demonstrate service to the community, but these programs could also work toward the development of more positive attitudes toward school and a willingness on the part of community residents to accept new and innovative educational programs.

At the same time, it is likely that concentrated vocational education programs in rural areas would appeal to many students who have dropped out of school, and who perhaps have already started families. Thus, the early childhood programs could help those potential students by offering high quality programs for their children, while at the same

time offering them programs designed for adults, and probably offered at a convenient hour.

In essence, this policy recommendation focuses on the development of specialty areas in teacher training for rural areas. It also appears to dovetail with the other policy recommendations, and appears to offer a variety of benefits to rural communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH AREAS

Each of the preceding policy recommendations could easily lead to recommendations for related research. Although that would be appropriate, it would also probably be redundant. One could generate several research questions that naturally flow from the policy recommendations. For example, the policy recommendation focusing on the recruitment of indigenous community to become teachers, could lead to questions such as, What are the appropriate characteristics for teaching in rural areas?, Which qualities are most likely to ensure permanence in a career in education in rural areas? and, What are the weaknesses of training indigenous community to be teachers of children in rural areas? Rather than pursue that line, four broader research areas will be specified. These areas tend to over-arch the preceding policy recommendations, and will, hopefully provide the necessary grist for the research discussion mill. The following four areas, then, are deemed important--

Regional projections of future employment opportunities. Although this recommended research area does not relate directly to staff development, it is clearly complementary. Research of this type would help teacher educators develop training programs for teachers that focus on the types of jobs that are likely to be available for students coming

from rural areas. At the same time, the information would provide insights concerning the nature of relocations that would be necessary, as well as the geographic distance to be encountered. In essence, this type of information would provide a foundation or groundwork for the development of vocational education and adult education teacher education programs.

Baseline data concerning both community and youth aspirations about the goals for schools. The review of the literature presented a great deal of narrative concerning the attitudes of communities in rural areas toward schools. There was, however, little data. Additionally, there was very little information concerning the aspirations that students might hold for the schools which they attend. This becomes an important area, as the literature clearly leads one to believe that the aspirations of children in schools, particularly adolescents, and their elders is likely to be quite different. Research in this area would also help rural educators and teacher education program developers begin to better understand the zone of capability of the school, and thus develop programs that have a better chance for success.

Delineation of specific areas of educational deficit, to school children in rural areas. There is little research in the areas of student learning and student abilities that focus on children from rural areas. Although there is no particular reason to expect that specific types of educational deficit are common to children in rural areas, the possibility clearly exists. In fact, one could generate hunches concerning this phenomenon that would be amenable to research. For example, it would not be surprising if rural school children, because

of their constrained and parochial background, have little understanding of the larger world in which we live. That is, it would not be surprising if the social science background of rural children is more limited than one normally finds with children from economically disadvantaged communities. This would, of course, imply a need for curriculum development and a complementary need for teacher education program development.

Realistic appraisals of the capability of schools to support change and provide impetus for improving general conditions of rural areas. One theme that comes through frequently in the literature is that schools are seen as pivotal or primary institutions for improving general conditions of rural areas. Although this paper has taken a somewhat conservative view in that area, it is recognized that in urban areas where this has been attempted, there are a variety of other institutions, organizations, agencies, and influences operating. It is possible that because of the very limited number of institutions available in rural areas, that schools could well play a different role than one normally finds in urban and suburban areas.

IN SUMMARY

The intent of this paper is to provide a foundation for and to develop recommendations for policy for staff development in rural areas, and to suggest important research areas. In order to accomplish this, a brief analysis of the field of teacher education was presented along with an estimate of the nature of a school organization as a host for staff development programs. A brief section attempted to identify the important rural educational problems that might be amenable to remedy

through staff development. Additionally, a context for policy development was presented in order to establish constraints and parameters within which realistic policies could be developed. Finally, recommendations for both policy and research areas were presented.

In developing this paper, every effort has been made not to create unrealistic expectations. While recognizing that some activists may believe that the recommendations for policy and research presented are constrained, the specific intent has been to suggest policy in research areas that directly address possible improvement within the zone of capability of schools. An unspoken contention that undergirds these recommendations is that the use of schools as a major instrument for the achievement of social policies is not feasible. Rather, policy that does not operate within the zone of capability of a school is likely to be not only non-productive, but also to run the risk of making conditions worse than before.

Footnotes

[1]Bruce R. Joyce, Sam J. Yarger, Kenneth R. Howey, Karen M. Harbeck and Thomas N. Kluwin. Preservice Teacher Education (Palo Alto, 1977). ERIC No. SP 011 438, March, 1978.

[2]Kenneth R. Howey, personal correspondence.

[3]Sam J. Yarger and Gary Galluzzo, "Financing Inservice Education: Directions Toward Policy," Educational Economics, II, No. 7, (November-December, 1977).

[4]Larry W. Hughes and Dolphus L. Spence. Attitudes and Orientations of Rural Groups and Effects on Educational Decision-Making and Innovation in Rural School Districts: A Synthesis of Research. Educational Resources Information Center, Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, New Mexico State University, July, 1971.

[5]Reported In:
Lewis R. Tamblyn. Rural Education in the United States, Rural Education Association, Washington, D. C., 1971.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Hughes and Spence, op. cit.

[8]C. B. Gilliland. "Counseling Aids Job Seekers," in A Good Life For More People, ed. Jack Hayes (The Yearbook of Agriculture, 1971), p. 147.

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[10]Thomas W. Walton and Herbert H. Lindsey. Educational Programs for Children of Migratory Agricultural Workers in Wisconsin. The University of Wisconsin, OE, US Dept. of HEW, 1963.

[11]Jonathan P. Sher, (Ed.). Education in Rural America, A Reassessment of Conventional Wisdom. Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1977.

[12]See: Kenneth R. Howey, Sam J. Yarger, and Bruce R. Joyce. Improving Teacher Education. Washington: Association of Teacher Educators, January, 1978.